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**THESIS**

**BAPTISM BY FIRE**  
**HUNGARY'S PARTICIPATION**  
**IN NATO'S KOSOVO CAMPAIGN**

by

Laszlo Pallos

June 2000

Thesis Advisor: Donald Abenheim  
Second Reader: Tjarck G. Roessler

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2000	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
TITLE AND SUBTITLE : BAPTISM BY FIRE - HUNGARY'S PARTICIPATION IN NATO'S KOSOVO CAMPAIGN			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Pallos, Laszlo				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) Hungary's unique situation in the Kosovo crisis of 1998/9 stemmed from the country's geographic and strategic position as the only NATO member adjacent to Yugoslavia; further important was the sensitivity regarding Belgrade's behavior toward the national minorities in Yugoslavia in view of the 350,000 ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina; finally, also vital was Hungary's briefest tenure in the Alliance before the onset of a severe crisis. The dilemma of Hungary at the end of the century approximates that, in a way, of Germany in the cold war. That is national division (of a kind) as well as being situated on the front-line of a conflict. Central and Eastern Europe has been the land of repressed national and ethnical conflicts for almost two centuries. These unresolved conflicts have meant constant threat to European security since the collapse of the communist bloc and still can endanger it. The primary objectives of Hungarian foreign policy after 1989 had been gaining membership in the EU and NATO and maintaining good relations with the bordering countries. The sheer irony of Hungary's participation in the Kosovo conflict is that having achieved one of its main objectives - joining NATO - it became a participant in the war against one of its neighbors.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Hungary, security and defense policy; Hungary, domestic politics; NATO, strategy and policy; European security policy; nationalism and ethnic conflicts in Europe; Kosovo, Vojvodina, Yugoslavia;			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 92	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT  Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE  Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT  Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  UL	

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**BAPTISM BY FIRE  
HUNGARY'S PARTICIPATION IN NATO'S KOSOVO CAMPAIGN**

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Major, Hungarian Army  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN  
NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

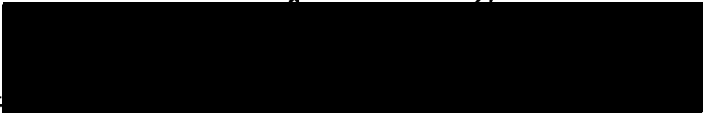
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## ABSTRACT

Hungary's unique situation in the Kosovo crisis of 1998/9 stemmed from the country's geographic and strategic position as the only NATO member adjacent to Yugoslavia; further important was the sensitivity regarding Belgrade's behavior toward the national minorities in Yugoslavia in view of the 350,000 ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina; finally, also vital was Hungary's briefest tenure in the Alliance before the onset of a severe crisis. The dilemma of Hungary at the end of the century approximates that, in a way, of Germany in the cold war. That is national division (of a kind) as well as being situated on the front-line of a conflict.

Central and Eastern Europe has been the land of repressed national and ethnical conflicts for almost two centuries. These unresolved conflicts have meant constant threat to European security since the collapse of the communist bloc and still can endanger it. The primary objectives of Hungarian foreign policy after 1989 had been gaining membership in the EU and NATO and maintaining good relations with the bordering countries. The sheer irony of Hungary's participation in the Kosovo conflict is that having achieved one of its main objectives - joining NATO - it became a participant in the war against one of its neighbors.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank professor Abenheim and colonel Roessler for their guidance and patience during the work in preparing this thesis.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

*"Being a gateway to the Balkans, Hungary was essential for  
NATO's Balkans policies..."*

Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán<sup>1</sup>

Just twelve days after the March 12, 1999 ceremony in Independence, Missouri, at which Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic officially became members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Alliance launched its first air strikes against Yugoslavia<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze some central aspects of Hungary's role in the resolution of the Kosovo conflict. Hungary's unique situation in the Kosovo crisis of 1998/9 stemmed from the country's geographic and strategic position as the only NATO member adjacent to Yugoslavia; its sensitivity regarding Belgrade's behavior towards the national minorities in Yugoslavia in view of the 350,000 ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina; and its briefest tenure in the Alliance. The dilemma of Hungary at the end of the century approximates that, in a way, of Germany in the cold war. That is national division (of a kind) as well as being situated on the front-line of a

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<sup>1</sup> Viktor Orbán's speech at NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Budapest 30 May 2000. Available[Online]: <http://www.mti.hu/english/> [31 May 2000].

conflict. Furthermore the pro-western orientation of the country after 1989 worsened the situation of the Hungarians outside of the present day borders, especially in the case of the Hungarian minorities living in Serbia. This situation approximates that of Germany, too. But Hungary cannot and will not pursue a policy of national unification without dreadful implications for all concerned, especially for those Hungarians living in Bačka-Vojvodina.<sup>3</sup>

Central and Eastern Europe has been the land of repressed national and ethnical conflicts for almost two centuries. These unresolved conflicts have meant constant threat to European security since the collapse of the communist bloc and still can endanger it. The thesis attempts to present the origins of these grievances and their present aspects. Additionally it will examine Hungary's involvement as one of the three newest members of the Alliance in "Operation Allied Force" and deduce the implications for Hungary's future role in the south-eastern European region and in NATO. It will present the Hungarian hopes and fears that were raised by the country's entry into the Alliance as well as the main concerns of the

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<sup>2</sup> In my thesis I will refer the federation of Serbia and Montenegro as Yugoslavia.

<sup>3</sup> The area of Bačka and Vojvodina was ethnically cleansed of Germans after 1945, as a reprisal for Nazi policies toward the Serbs after 1941.

members of NATO and Russia concerning Hungary's membership. The thesis examines the effects of the Hungarian participation in the resolution of the Kosovo conflict concerning the above mentioned hopes and fears. It concludes that Hungary's unique situation in the Alliance cannot be sustained though Hungary can play a special role in the troubled Balkans.

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## II. BACKGROUND

### A. NATO ENLARGEMENT AND THE KOSOVO CAMPAIGN - WILL THE DOUBTS PERSIST?

With its active involvement Hungary became a member of an allied military operation that aimed to prevent the further spreading of an ethnic conflict in the Balkans. In the process of NATO enlargement the most serious doubts about Hungary's NATO membership concerned its unresolved ethnic minority based conflicts with the neighboring countries. An outspoken critic of NATO enlargement, Ted Galen Carpenter, had some particular examples of these worries.

The decision to invite Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to join NATO creates the prospect of U.S. involvement in an assortment of nasty ethnic disputes throughout Central and Eastern Europe. One of the proposed new members, Hungary, has long-standing problems with three of its neighbors because of discrimination against ethnic Hungarians living in those countries. Tensions are especially acute between Hungary and Serbia over Belgrade's continuing mistreatment of Hungarian citizens in Serbia's province of Vojvodina.<sup>4</sup>

The Hungarian governments after 1989 understood the significance of resolving these "nasty" conflicts, and signed basic treaties "on good-neighborly relations and

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<sup>4</sup> Carpenter, Ted Galen and Kislitsyn, Pavel. "NATO Expansion Flashpoint No. 2 The Border between Hungary and Serbia." *Cato Foreign Policy Briefing* No. 45 (November 24, 1997) Available [Online]: <http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefs/fpb-045es.html> [19 November 1999].

friendly co-operation" with all the neighboring countries but Yugoslavia. NATO also tried to help these countries to get over their ethnically based conflicts through its Partnership for Peace Program providing an institutionalized framework for political and military cooperation for all member countries. The primary objectives of Hungarian foreign policy after 1989 had been gaining membership in the EU and NATO and maintaining good relations with the bordering countries, while supporting the minority rights of the ethnic Hungarian minorities in these countries in accordance with current European institutional standards. The sheer irony of Hungary's final effort in foreign politics is that having achieved one of its main objectives - joining NATO - it became a participant in the war against one of its neighbors, hence contradicting another major political objective, the nourishing of good neighborhood relations.

The opponents of the NATO enlargement process had serious concerns about the effects of the expansion on the Alliance's cohesion and effectiveness as well.<sup>5</sup> Maintaining the cohesion of the already 19-member-Alliance was one of the hardest tasks during the Kosovo operation, but these

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<sup>5</sup> See: David S Yost, *NATO transformed The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, pp. 117-118.

difficulties were scarcely caused by the new members. Although Hungary was in a particularly hard situation because of its proximity to the zone of the operations and the presence of 340,000 ethnic Hungarians in the heavily bombed Serbian province of Vojvodina, Budapest fulfilled all its NATO obligations.

#### **B. NATO AND THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM BOSNIA**

*"The post-Cold War euphoria was succeeded by a period that brought disappointment and disillusionment."<sup>6</sup>*

This statement primarily applies to Central and Eastern Europe, but the most tragic fate in the region at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fell to the nations of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, unlike those of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, resulted in several bloody wars among the former constituent republics. The longest and probably the bloodiest of these wars took place in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995. The hesitation of the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and NATO to

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<sup>6</sup> Address by H. E. Mr. János Martonyi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary United Nations General Assembly Fifty-third session General Debate Available [Online]: [http://www.mfa.gov.hu/1999/Martonyi\\_beszed/mjensz980929e.html](http://www.mfa.gov.hu/1999/Martonyi_beszed/mjensz980929e.html) [Nov 28 1999].

intervene effectively in this conflict cost thousands of lives. "Long after he had left Belgrade, Ambassador Zimmermann reflected on the tragedy: 'The refusal of the Bush administration to commit American power early was our greatest mistake of the entire Yugoslav crisis. It made an unjust outcome inevitable and wasted the opportunity to save over a hundred thousand lives.'"<sup>7</sup> The final decision of the US to use considerable force in operation conducted with its NATO allies stopped the killings firmly and provided a chance to develop a feasible peace agreement.<sup>8</sup> The lack of consensus among the leading powers inside the Alliance considerably delayed this process: "NATO could not intervene effectively to stop hostilities in Bosnia until the main Western powers, eventually led by the United States, finally agreed in 1995 to do so..."<sup>9</sup>. The intensified NATO presence and commitment made it clear that the Balkans had become strategically important, at least as a possible serious trouble spot. Finally the negative experiences of troops from NATO nations in the United Nations peacekeeping mission - UNPROFOR - under an ineffective UN leadership

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<sup>7</sup> Holbrooke, R., *To End a War*, p. 27, Random House New York, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Holbrooke argues: "Had the United States not intervened, the war would have continued for years and ended disastrously." Holbrooke, R., *To End a War*, p. 358, Random House New York, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> David S Yost, *NATO transformed The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, 275.

made the political and military leaders of NATO more reluctant to subordinate their forces to UN control.

Richard Holbrooke, the chief mediator of the Dayton Agreement that ended the Bosnian war, refers to the post-Yugoslav wars as "the greatest collective security failure of the West since the 1930s." He states:

Yugoslavia undeniably represented a failure of historic dimensions. Why and how had it happened—and just at the moment of the West's great triumph over communism? There was, of course, no single, or simple, answer. But five major factors helped explain the tragedy: first, a misreading of Balkan history; second, the end of the Cold War; third, the behavior of the Yugoslav leaders themselves; fourth, the inadequate American response to the crisis; and, finally, the mistaken belief of the Europeans that they could handle their first post-Cold War challenge on their own.

The Yugoslavia crisis should have been handled by NATO, the Atlantic institution that mattered most, the one in which the United States was the core member. The best chance to prevent war would have been to present the Yugoslavs with a clear warning that NATO airpower would be used against any party that tried to deal with the ethnic tensions of Yugoslavia by force.<sup>10</sup>

### C. CONSTITUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia and its predecessors were formed on the ruins of two empires - the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire - during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The origins of the Serb-Yugoslav statehood go back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century when

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<sup>10</sup> Holbrooke, R., *To End a War*, pp. 21-28, Random House New York, 1998.

the Kingdom of Serbia was established. The mediaeval history of the Serb state was terminated in 1459, when after several defeats Serbia came under Ottoman rule, which lasted until 1867. Having been freed from Ottoman rule the Serbs soon found themselves in the sphere of influence of another power, the Habsburg Empire. Serbia's independence was recognized by the great powers at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 but it was challenged by the Austro-Hungarian expansion into the Balkans. The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908 escalated the tensions, which culminated in the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. The Austro-Hungarian government held Serbia responsible for the assassination and declared war, hence starting World War I.<sup>11</sup>

The peace treaties of Saint-Germain and Trianon which the allied powers signed with Austria and Hungary after the end of the Great War<sup>12</sup> annexed the South-Slav-inhabited territories to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which later was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The issue between Croats and Serbs in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was

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<sup>11</sup> There are more factors and actors which eventually led to the start of the Great War - but obviously the assassination "triggered" the outbreak of international hostilities.

<sup>12</sup> British public, politics, and academics mostly refer to WWI as the "Great War".

in part a reaction against the expansion of Habsburg rule. In the case of the Croats and Serbs under the rule of the Hungarian half of the empire after 1867, this idea formed a reaction to Magyarization and the manner in which the empire was run in the face of a pan-slavic ideal espoused, in part, by Serbs and Croats, but with Russian sponsorship at the expense of Vienna and Budapest especially in the years before 1914. In the years until 1919, the Croats came to embrace a kind of federative ideal, while certain Serbs embraced centralizing, imperial ambitions on the model of what was believed to have existed in antiquity or the medieval period. The construction of the kingdom of Slovenes, Serbs and Croats underwent greater stress in the middle inter war period with pressure from the Italians (against the Slovenes) as well as that of Greece, such that, once the Mussolini regime established itself by the middle of the 1920s, the Italians promoted Croat separatism-federative strivings in Yugoslavia at the expense of the Belgrad royal regime. This support promoted Croat terrorists who assassinated the King of the Serbs and the French Foreign Minister in Marseilles in 1934. This syndrome then underwent a violent and disastrous escalation in 1941, when the Axis powers dismembered Yugoslavia and

the Croats sought to annihilate Serbs in their newly created Axis nation. Serbia fell under German control and Vojvodina also had a significant German population (Donau Schwaben) in addition to Hungarians and Slovaks. All of these powers, Hungary, Slovakia, and Croatia - on the Axis side until 1944 - had to give way to the onrush of Soviet power which was aided by the Serbian partisans under Tito. The latter embraced something of the lost ideal of a Southern-Slav federative polity in which the peoples on the periphery had a degree of constitutional autonomy and the legacy of the ethnic violence of the era 1941-1945 was ruthlessly suppressed via a policy of carrot and stick.<sup>13</sup> Tito's Yugoslavia constituted six republics - Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro and Macedonia - and two autonomous provinces - Vojvodina and Kosovo. The peoples of the Southern-Slav federation in its form that emerged by the 1960s managed to live happily with one another and in a state of peace that drew the admiration of the West. In this connection, Tito created a kind of domestic and external peace via the idea of the non-aligned movement of the 1950s and 1960s that elevated

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<sup>13</sup> See: Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-1941* (Cambridge, 1945); Ivan Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1998)



Yugoslavia's status in the European constellation of the cold war, while it secured the generous economic support of the west to create the impression of a higher standard of living than might have been found elsewhere in the communist east.

This system could not long endure beyond the death of its creator in 1980, especially amid the general transformation of diplomacy, economy and society of Europe that crystallized by the end of the 1980s. The following disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was followed by a series of local wars among the former constituent republics. Finally Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina became independent states, while Serbia and Montenegro formed a new federal state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The history of the South-Slav unity was filled with episodic fighting between the Serbs and the other nationalities - mainly the Croats - for and against Serb domination. Serbia as the first to gain sovereignty always tried to monopolize the leadership in every aspect of the political and social sphere. The centuries long desire to establish Great-Serbia fulfilled their destiny in the Wars of Yugoslav Succession of 1991-95. Serbia and its

nationalist leader, Slobodan Milosevic played for high stakes and lost a lot. Not only were they not able to unite the Serb-inhabited territories of the former Yugoslavia, but the once joking matter of the "Great Belgrade nightmare" i.e. Serbia without Kosovo and Vojvodina left alone by Montenegro, may become reality.

#### **D. YUGOSLAV-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS AFTER 1989**

At the end of the Cold War the situation in Yugoslavia and Hungary had many similar aspects. Both countries had severe economic problems - practically they were both in deep economic crises, though the causes of the crises were somewhat different. Beyond the economic crises there were political crises in both countries as well. The ruling communist parties could no longer maintain their absolute control over the societies, and they were forced to allow multi-party elections, which were held in 1989 in Hungary and in 1990 in Yugoslavia. However the two elections had different effects; Hungary started to build a Western-type democratic society, while in Yugoslavia the appearance of nationalist-separatist movements caused the bloody disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Wars of Yugoslav Succession had several serious effects on Hungary. First of all it intensified the feeling of insecurity in the Hungarian public, and contributed to the so-called "security vacuum", which had already evolved.

Hungary is nervous. With the permission of the government in Budapest, its airspace is being used by Nato's AWACS surveillance planes monitoring the Bosnian no-fly zone. It has a long border with Croatia and Serbia, and is thus involved in the international sanctions against Serbia, which are also affecting its own economy. In the Serbian province of Vojvodina and in Serb-occupied Croatia there are some 400,000 ethnic Hungarians who could fall victim to a new outbreak of 'ethnic cleansing'. Within Hungary itself, there are understandable fears of cross-border punitive air raids by Serbian planes, and eventually of Serbian expansionism.<sup>14</sup>

However Hungary's above mentioned contribution to the NATO actions during the Bosnia conflict - Hungary allowed the use of the Hungarian airspace for the NATO aircraft, participating in the enforcement of the UN Security Council resolution 781 (1992) and 816 (1993) - provided a public sense of some quasi security guarantees, which reduced the level of feeling insecure.

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<sup>14</sup> "Hungary Puts NATO on the Spot." *The Independent (London)*, May 18 1993. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/MAJPAP (HUNGARY AND SECURITY VACUUM AND WAR AND YUGOSLAVIA) [March 25 2000].

Another effect was the UN sanctioned economic embargo against the FRY, which caused considerable losses to the Hungarian economy.<sup>15</sup>

Hungary is banking on UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to rubber stamp a Security Council recommendation, which would pave the way for Budapest being compensated for trade losses as a result of the embargo against Yugoslavia. The UN recommendation, which is expected to go before the Secretary General shortly, does not mean that Hungary would get financial compensation from the United Nations itself. The UN Security Council in its recommendation, urges "immediate help" for Hungary, and calls on the member countries and UN financial institutions to investigate ways of providing aid. The Council also urges compensation for Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine, which like Hungary share borders with Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup>

Hungary's main concern towards the Yugoslav wars was caused by the Hungarian ethnic minorities living in Serbia's Vojvodina region. Since these wars were generated by overheated nationalism the ethnic Hungarians could have been easily involved.

Given what Serbs have been up to elsewhere in former Yugoslavia, Hungary has reason to fear for the safety of the 300,000 or so ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina. But so far it has been content to use only diplomatic pressure to advertise its concerns. Should "ethnic cleansing" spread to

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<sup>15</sup> The Washington Times reported that according to official estimates Hungary lost 1.2 billion dollars in trade and transshipment of goods to Yugoslavia. November 16, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> *Inter Press Service*, July 9 1993. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/MAJPAP (HUNGARY ANDYUGOSLAVIA AND EMBARGO) [March 25 2000].

Vojvodina, Hungary's government would come under extreme pressure to act.<sup>17</sup>

Hungary's security had already been affected by the relatively huge inflow of refugees during the preceding years before the Yugoslav wars and it was further endangered by the mass war refugee influx. "Over the past six years Hungarians have witnessed the arrival, in rapid succession, of several large groups of refugees from neighbouring countries, most of whom could neither return to their homelands nor move to the West. Together with illegal aliens, these people have burdened Hungary at a time when it was undergoing both major political change and economic strain."<sup>18</sup> According to the estimation of the Hungarian authorities some 70,000 refugees fled to Hungary between 1991 and 1993 because of the Yugoslav crisis.<sup>19</sup>

The post Cold War Yugoslav-Hungarian relations were worsened by one more important event, the Hungarian-Croatian arms transfer scandal. During the initial phase of the break up of Yugoslavia, Hungary transferred small arms to Croatia, which were used to arm the Croatian paramilitary and police forces, which Belgrade regarded as

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<sup>17</sup> The Economist December 25 1993. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/MAJPAP (HUNGARY AND ETHNIC MINORITIES AND YUGOSLAVIA) [March 28 2000].

<sup>18</sup> Pataki, J. "The Recent History of the Hungarian Refugee Problem" *RFE/RL Research Report* 17 June 1994. p. 34.

a hostile step. "Belgrade has already condemned Hungary for shipping 30,000 Kalashnikov rifles to Croatia. A videotape of Croatia's former defence minister finalising that deal with Hungarian officials was broadcast on Belgrade television earlier this year before the army put him on trial in absentia."<sup>20</sup>

Summing up, the post 1989 relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary were quite overloaded by the tensions of the conflicts in the former SFRY. Since Hungary had some serious disputes over the ethnic Hungarians with Slovakia and Rumania too, the Hungarian foreign policy's efforts to normalize Hungary's relations with its neighbors were absolutely reasonable.

#### **E. KOSOVO AND VOJVODINA - SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

Kosovo and Vojvodina are legally the two newest provinces of Serbia.<sup>21</sup> Although Kosovo is considered to be the historical heart of Serbia, officially it became part

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> *Sunday Times*, September 1 1991. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/WORLD/ALLNWS/NONENG (HUNGARY AND CROATIA AND ARMS TRANSFER) [April 15 2000].

<sup>21</sup> Several scholars claim that these two provinces legally never belonged to Serbia, but Yugoslavia. "(In fact Vojvodina had never belonged to Serbia, having joined the Yugoslav kingdom in 1918; and at the level of legal theory, as we have seen, Kosovo had also been incorporated into the Yugoslav kingdom, and not into the previous Serbian one.)" Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, p. 329, New York University Press, 1998.

of it only in 1912.<sup>22</sup> Vojvodina belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of World War I when the territory of Vojvodina was annexed by the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which later was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After the Second World War, within the new state, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the two had an "autonomous Province" status.

Historically the seat of the medieval Serb kingdom, Kosovo was only liberated from Turkish rule by the Serb Army in 1912, when Albanians, predominantly Muslim, were the majority population. Attempts at colonisation between the two World Wars failed to shift the ethnic balance in the Serbs' favour. When federal Yugoslavia was proclaimed in 1945, Kosovo, by virtue of its ethnic Albanian majority, became first an autonomous region and then an autonomous province. Decentralisation of Yugoslavia, culminating in the 1974 constitution, which transferred considerable power from the federation to constituent republics, produced a political hybrid. Kosovo (and the northern province of Vojvodina) nominally remained part of Serbia, but enjoyed all rights of constituent republics but one: in accordance with Leninist principles, the right to secede was explicitly granted to republics, but not to provinces. Although not formally a republic, Kosovo ran its

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<sup>22</sup> Noel Malcolm argues that though Serbia conquered Kosovo in 1912-13, but legally never annexed it. "When Kosovo was conquered in 1912-13, Serbia was operating under its constitution of 1903. Article Four of that constitution clearly states that no change to the frontiers of Serbia can be valid unless it has been agreed by the Grand National Assembly - not the 'Ordinary Assembly' or parliament, but a special enlarged assembly summoned to deal with constitutional matters. No such Grand National Assembly was ever convened to discuss or ratify the extension of Serbia's borders to include Kosovo and Macedonia. Kosovo was not incorporated into Serbia by the standards of international law either." Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, pp. 264-265, New York University Press, 1998.

own affairs, with full veto powers in the federal system.<sup>23</sup>

The two provinces are the ethnically least Serbian within Serbia, though in contrast with Kosovo, Vojvodina has a 60 per cent Serbian ethnic majority. "But here the similarities end. Unlike Kosovo where the Albanians represented a clear-cut 90 percent majority, Vojvodina itself is a patchwork of ethnic groups - Serbs, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Croats etc. The largest non-Serbian group, the Hungarians, comprises only some 17 percent of the province's population."<sup>24</sup> According to the 1991 census results the non-Serb population of the province reached 47 per cent and included over 350,000 Hungarians, 78,000 Croats, 67,000 Slovenians, 47,000 Montenegrins, 25,000 Romanians, 20,000 Ukrainians and other non-Serb groups. These numbers are constantly changing as more and more Serbs are moving into Vojvodina, they have already tipped the long standing but fragile ethnic balance of the region. The similarities in Kosovo's and Vojvodina's legal status did not mean similar economic conditions. Moreover there is a great economic disparity between the two regions;

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<sup>23</sup> Kusovac, Z. "Different realities wrestle for Kosovo" *Jane's Intelligence Review* Sep 1 1998. p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> "Hungarian Steps and Missteps in Kosovo." *Weekly Defense Monitor*, Volume 3 Issue # 29 Available [Online]: <<http://www.cdi.org/weekly/1999/issue29.html>> [12 December 1999].



Vojvodina is the most prosperous area of Yugoslavia, whereas Kosovo has been the poorest.

The autonomous status of the two provinces was annulled in 1989 with the amendment of the Serbian constitution. Following the loss of their autonomy the political objectives of the ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina and the moderate ethnic Albanians in Kosovo were similar - to regain their autonomous rights. The methods they chose were different; the ethnic Hungarians participated in the political life of Serbia, while the ethnic Albanians boycotted every form of co-operation with the Serbian authorities. The plans on the future status of Kosovo had their influence on the ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina, and even on the Hungarian politicians. The most extreme example of this interlocking thinking was the demand of the chairman of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party for Vojvodina's independence from Serbia.

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### III. EUROPE AND THE MINORITY ISSUE

#### A. ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL MINORITY CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL-EUROPE<sup>25</sup>

The treatment of ethnic minorities has been a sensitive issue all over Europe and particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. Europe's geographical characteristics, but far more historic events and rather accidental "border-drawing" produced a map of fragmented ethnic groups all over the continent. During the era of the re-birth of the national feelings in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the territory of Central and South-East Europe was occupied by two great empires, the Habsburg and the Ottoman. The turning point in the history of modern nationalism in Europe was the French revolution. Its ideas spread all over Europe generating the necessary spiritual excitement for changes in the societies. The first events that really shook the central and south-eastern part of Europe were the revolutions of 1848, which in several cases connected the awakening nationalism of the nations with demands for independence.

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<sup>25</sup> On general development of nationalism see: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983); Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Princeton, 1955); Hagen Schulze, *Staat und Nation in der detuschen Europaeischen Geschichte* Munich, 1994); Idem. *Nation Building in Central Europe* (Leamington Spa. 1985),

The Revolution of 1848 in Central Europe marked the awakening of various peoples to national consciousness. Other Central European peoples who agitated for national independence in 1848 include the Poles, whose territory was divided among Russia, Germany, and Austria<sup>26</sup>; the Czechs and the Hungarians, subjects of the Austrian monarchy; and the Christian peoples living in the Balkan Peninsula under the rule of the Turkish sultan.<sup>27</sup>

The decline of the Ottoman Empire from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century started at its peripheries. Serbia as the northernmost part of the empire began to push seriously for independence in 1812 and attained it in September of 1829; Serbian nationalism was a main driving force in this process. Gaining quasi independence from the Ottoman Empire the Serbs turned their face towards their still suppressed fellow-nations living in the Habsburg Empire.

The majority of the Jugo-Slav peoples of Europe, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, lived under foreign domination. The Austrian Slovenians under German, the Serb immigrants of Hungary under Magyar, the Dalmatian Slavs under Italian, the Slavs of the Balkans under Turkish rule as subject peoples, without the leadership of a national historical class, without a state life or local self-government. Only the Croats were successful in safeguarding their state life and historical continuity to a certain extent.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> One has to reconsider that at that time neither Germany nor Austria as known right now did exist as nation states.

<sup>27</sup> "Nationalism," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2000 Available [Online]: <<http://encarta.msn.com>> [April 28 2000].

<sup>28</sup> Jaszi, O., "The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy" 403-4.

Being the first among them to achieve independence, the Serbs became the vanguard fighters of the South-Slav unity. The new obstacle in their way was formed by the Habsburg Empire. Hence the awakening nationalism of the Southern-Slavs and of the other "nations without history"<sup>29</sup> became the principal cause of the decline of the Habsburg Empire as well.

Beginning approximately with the end of the eighteenth century a new social force appears which, originating from small rivulets, became in several decades the torrent of a powerful stream which undermined more and more the spirit and institutions of the dynastico-patrimonial state. This force was the modern national feeling in the name of which each nation of the monarchy, great and small, laid claim to self-expression and local administration, and, several of them, to an independent state life.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the appearance of national feelings the economic and social conflicts between the classes appeared in "national camouflage".

This process of evolution had inevitably a national reaction. The serfs began to think more critically concerning their own situation. The economic and political pressure of feudal society

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<sup>29</sup> "... those people, which like the Slovenians, the Ruthenians, the Jugo-Slavs under the Turkish conquests, or the Czechs under Austrian absolutism had lost their former nobility, either because their leading classes were exterminated or because they were assimilated by a new aristocracy. These nations remained, through the lack of an intellectual leading class, 'nations without history,' they did not have a conscious role in the respective countries, but, purely as peasant and bondsmen masses, they continued throughout centuries a stagnant, vegetative life as passive instruments of a foreign nobility. They became not real nations but simple *Bedientvölker*, servant-peoples, the language of which lived only as a despised dialect in the backyard slum quarters of the landlords." Jaszi, O., "The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy" 249.

<sup>30</sup> Jaszi, O., "The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy" 248.

was felt as a national exploitation. The Czech, the Slovak, the Rumanian, the Rhutenian, and the other masses of bondsmen identified the system of feudal oppression with the national oppression exercised by the German, Hungarian, or Polish upper classes. The rebellions of the serfs very often took on national hue. On the other hand the fear and hatred of the privileged classes against the revolting serfs assumed the form of national prejudice.<sup>31</sup>

After 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, the suppression of the nationalities living in the Hungarian part of the Empire gained new form, the form of artificial "magyarization". Since the Hungarians/Magyars were always a minority they tried to switch the ratio by a forced assimilation of the non-Magyar population. Magyarization took place through different forms: through education mainly in Hungarian, through the local administration, through the "antiquated and corrupt electoral system" - "the most reactionary system of Europe"<sup>32</sup>.

There were also other methods which were applied in order to build up a unitary Magyar state. Such were: the Magyarization of village names even in regions where there was practically no Magyar-speaking population; the Magyarization of family names which was in many cases the expression of sincere loyalty but later it was extended by governmental pressure in order to manifest the Magyar character of the state before foreign public opinion; Magyar agricultural colonization in the midst of compact nationality

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<sup>31</sup> Jaszi, O., *"The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy"* 253.

<sup>32</sup> Jaszi, O., *"The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy"* 332-3.

settlements which had naturally no other result than the assimilation of these Magyar islets in the sea of the nationalities; the distribution of Magyar nobility which had a great prestige value, especially among those who tried to be accepted by the gentry.<sup>33</sup>

As an Austrian scholar, Joseph Redlich, noted:"

In the whole history of the nineteenth century - omitting the oppressions of the Poles by the Russians - there was scarcely a second example of such a comprehensive and premeditated denial and annihilation of all legal enactments and procedures concerning the majority of the total population of the country, disregarding the political rights and privileges accorded by law by the Magyars to the nationalities, than that carried on by the Magyar upper classes and rulers of the country since 1867, against all their citizens of foreign tongue and culture.<sup>34</sup>

Hungary had to pay a high price for this subjection of the non-Magyar nationalities after World War I, when two third of its territory and more than half of its population was annexed according to the provisions of the Trianon Treaty. Furthermore about 5 million Magyars became citizens of the successor states, hence becoming national minorities. The treatment of these Magyars was similar or the same as it had been practiced before the war by them. The fate of these Magyar nationalities gave birth to the continuous revisionist efforts between the two world wars,

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<sup>33</sup> Jaszi, O., "The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy" 336.

<sup>34</sup> Jaszi, O., "The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy" 336-7.

but after a temporary re-annexation of some of these territories during the Second World War, they remained outside of their "mother country".

#### **B. COMPREHENSIVE POLICIES TOWARDS THE NATIONAL MINORITIES**

Efforts to protect the rights of the ethnic minorities appeared on the political agenda of the various nation states almost immediately after the peace treaties of World War I (Versailles, Saint-Germain, Trianon, Neuilly, and Sèvres). But a real codification of the protection of ethnic minority rights has been taking place only after the Second World War under the auspices of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The most important documents of this process are: the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), especially Articles 26 and 27; the UN Declaration on the Rights of persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992); the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and the Framework Convention on the Protection of the National Minorities (1995) by the Council of Europe. These documents set standards for states on the treatment and behavior towards their ethnic minorities.



The Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly constantly monitor observance of these regulations and make further recommendations. Hungary is deeply interested in this process since "the Hungarian state and nation are not confined within the same borders, which requires increased responsibility on the part of Hungary."<sup>35</sup> An unfortunately misinterpreted version of this responsibility was the infamous declaration in 1990 by the then Hungarian Prime Minister, Jozsef Antall, who wanted to become "in spirit" the Prime Minister of all the 15 million Hungarians. His statement was a reference to the 4.5 million ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries, who had become foreign citizens after the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty. Because of its resemblance to the post World War I pan-Magyarist slogans Antall's speech caused negative feelings in the neighboring countries and all over the world.

In the current atmosphere of rabid nationalism and Western tolerance of forced border changes in the Balkans, suspicions have soared in the countries surrounding Hungary that it may seek the kind of ethnic reunion being brutally accomplished by the Serbs. Suspicions that Hungary wants its empire back have been rife since March, 1990, when late Prime Minister Jozsef Antall declared his aim of working for the interests of all 15 million Hungarians.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Government Programme for a Civic Hungary on the Eve of a New Millenium Available [Online]: <http://www.htmh.hu/govpr-frame.htm> [6 December 1999].

<sup>36</sup> "Ethnic Tension Poses Threat to Hungarians" *Los Angeles Times*, January 7 1994. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/WORLD/NONENG/ (Antall and 15 million) [16 May 2000].

The response of the Slovak, Rumanian and Serb politicians and public was harsh, but the fears were compensated later by the so-called basic treaties between Hungary and all its neighbors but Yugoslavia. Since then the Hungarian foreign policy's main task is to stand for the rights of the Hungarian ethnic minorities living in the neighboring countries in cooperation with their "home countries."

## IV. THE KOSOVO CRISIS OF 1998-1999

### A. THE ORIGINS OF THE KOSOVO CONFLICT

Kosovo, the southwestern province of Serbia, is historically the oldest part of Serbia. It is a "holy land" for the Serbs arguing that their ancestors settled there in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Kosovo's landscape is thoroughly dotted by monuments of Serbian history and by shrines of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Kosovo Polje was the site of the famous battle of 1389, where the Ottoman army defeated the Serbs. The battle of Kosovo became a part of the Serbian national myth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a symbol of the struggle for freedom and independence.<sup>37</sup>

The population of the province was multi-ethnic in almost every period of history. The most important ethnicity besides the Serbs was the Albanian. Their ancestors, the Illyrians, had inhabited the territory of Kosovo before the arrival of the Serbs. During the Ottoman occupation the Albanians gradually out-numbered the Serbs and they became a permanent segment of the population. As the Ottoman Empire became more and more "the sick man of Europe" the Albanians living in the empire tried to get rid

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<sup>37</sup> President Milosevic celebrated the 600-year-anniversary of the 1389 battle as the most outstanding event in Serbian history.

of the Ottoman rule more and more forcefully. There were several uprisings between 1908 and 1912 and finally they forced the Turkish government to accept the "Fourteen Points of Hasan Prishtina" and Istanbul agreed to form an Albanian quasi-state within the empire.<sup>38</sup> Having not been able to repress the Albanian uprising the weakness of the Ottoman Empire was unfolded. "In the end, like Samson in the Temple of Gaza, they pulled down the columns of the Ottoman Empire upon on their own head. It was the Albanians and not the Serbs or Bulgars or Greeks who defeated the Turks."<sup>39</sup> Realizing the fatal weakness of the Ottoman Empire, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro formed an anti-Ottoman alliance and Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 18 October 1912, starting the First Balkan War. During the war, Serbia occupied the territory of Kosovo and by the terms of the Treaty of London of 1913 annexed it.<sup>40</sup> But they could not enjoy their new possession for a long time. During World War I Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria occupied Kosovo. After the end of the war Serbia regained its authority over the

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<sup>38</sup> Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, pp. 246-248, New York University Press, 1998.

<sup>39</sup> Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, p. 249, New York University Press, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile to prevent Serbia's excessive strengthening the Great Powers agreed to form an independent Albanian state.

province in 1918, and took it as an integral part of the Serbian Kingdom to the new state of "The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes". Almost immediately they started a colonization campaign in the province, sending Serb settlers there and denying any special rights to the Albanians, even denying the existence of an Albanian population in Kosovo.<sup>41</sup> The colonization process was planned to change the national composition of the population in Kosovo, increasing the ratio of the Serbs in the province by granting them land, and driving the Albanians away.

The colonization programme was a complex phenomenon, serving a variety of aims: the overriding, long-term purpose was to change the national composition of the population in Kosovo (and in Macedonia, which was also colonized), but other factors were also involved. One such factor was a desire to stop the overflow of people from Serbia and Montenegro who were emigrating to North America, by offering them grants of free land closer to home. Another was the policy of punishing the *kaçaks* by confiscating their property: the most effective way of enforcing this punishment was to give their land to new settlers. Security policy also influenced the general pattern of location of the colonies: new villages of Serbian or Montenegrin settlers were concentrated strategically along the main communication routes, and efforts were made (not very successfully) to establish such

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<sup>41</sup> "A statement drawn up by the Yugoslav delegation at the League of Nations, in response to Albanian criticisms in 1929, plainly said: 'Our position has always been that in our southern regions, which have been integral parts of our state or were annexed to our Kingdom before 1 January 1919, there are no national minorities. That position is still our last word on the question of the recognition of minorities in Southern Serbia.'" Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, p. 268, New York University Press, 1998.

colonies in the sensitive border area adjoining Albania. (...) As a Serbian policy of the previous year (1937) noted: 'This is below the minimum for subsistence. But that is and has been our aim: to make their life impossible, and in that way to force them to emigrate.'<sup>42</sup>

The short-term result of colonization was a measurable increase in the ratio of the Serbs, but to dramatically change that, they needed more extreme plans.

The total number of colonists who came to Kosovo was just over 13,000 families: perhaps 70,000 people altogether, equivalent to more than ten per cent of Kosovo's entire population. Writing in 1928, the Serbian official Djordje Krstić described the colonization programme as a great 'success' in demographic terms: whereas, he said, 'we' were only 24 per cent of the population of Kosovo in 1919, the figure had now risen to 38 per cent. (...) One member of the club (Serbian Cultural Club in Belgrade), Orestije Krstić, proposed: 'The land must be bought from the Albanians, but of course only when it cannot be taken from them without compensation'; another, Djoka Perina, thought it necessary to create a 67,5 per cent majority of Serbs in 'Southern Serbia', for which purpose he advocated introducing 470,000 colonists and expelling 300,000 Albanians.<sup>43</sup>

Plans for the total expulsion of the Albanians might seem at first sight to have belonged to the realm of pure fantasy; but fantasy came very close to becoming a reality. From 1933 onwards there were serious discussions between the Yugoslav and Turkish governments over the deportation to Turkey of huge numbers of Muslim Albanians. (...)the text of an intergovernmental agreement was eventually drawn up, and initialled on 11 July 1938. According to this agreement,

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<sup>42</sup> Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, pp. 278-283, New York University Press, 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, pp. 282-284, New York University Press, 1998.

Turkey would take 40,000 families, at a price of 500 Turkish pounds per family: a family was defined as 'blood relations under one roof', which in the Kosovo countryside would include many three-generation households of more than ten members. (...) The entire process was meant to take six years, from 1939 to 1944. Fortunately for the Albanians of Kosovo, the Second World War prevented it from ever coming into effect.<sup>44</sup>

After the Second World War Serbia became a member of the Federation of the Socialist Republics of Yugoslavia, and Kosovo and Vojvodina as provinces of Serbia gained autonomous status in 1974.<sup>45</sup> In 1989 Slobodan Milosevic, then the First Secretary of the Serbian Communist Party, annulled the autonomous status of both provinces. By that time the proportion of the Albanian population in Kosovo exceeded 80 percent. Deprived of their autonomy, the Albanians chose the method of passive resistance against the Serbs. A shadow state was established inside the borders of Kosovo, with its own administration, education, taxation and police. The spiritual leader of the non-violent resistance was Ibrahim Rugova, president of the shadow-state and chairman of the Democratic League of Kosova. Rugova's policy seemed to be unsuccessful, and

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<sup>44</sup> Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, pp. 285-286, New York University Press, 1998.

<sup>45</sup> "...many Serbs had always resented the existence of the two autonomous provinces, regarding their creation as some sort of punitive truncation of Serbia by the half-Croat, half-Slovene Josip Broz Tito." Malcolm, N., *Kosovo A Short History*, p. 329, New York University Press, 1998.

from 1996 several intellectuals and politicians challenged the non-violent tactics. The most radical opposition group, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) started an armed campaign for the independence of Kosovo, which grew into a full-scale guerrilla war.

As an answer to the KLA's actions the Serbian authorities started the systematic expulsion of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. In 1998, however, ethnic Albanians composed 90 per cent of the population in Kosovo.

**B. NATO'S DECISIONS AND ACTIONS CONCERNING THE 1998-99 KOSOVO CRISIS**

During the atrocities in 1998 in Kosovo, NATO, having "learned from the lessons" of Bosnia, showed greater readiness to intervene in the conflict. After several months of violence and atrocities against the unarmed ethnic Albanians by the Serbian security forces, NATO decided to intervene and to stop an apparent act of genocide.

When NATO launched its air campaign, the situation in Kosovo was one of rising ethnic violence, suppression of democracy, a breakdown of law and order, systematic human rights abuses by the ruling authorities, and a refusal by the Belgrade government to seek, or accept, a political solution. At the same time, there was evidence that the government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was planning to escalate its campaign of repression. The international



community could see a humanitarian disaster looming.<sup>46</sup>

After an open threat to bomb Yugoslavia unless Belgrade stopped its offensive in Kosovo, the representatives of the parties involved in the conflict were invited to peace talks in Rambouillet, France.

It is important to recall the enormous effort made by NATO and the international community to avoid military intervention over Kosovo, while making clear to President Milosevic its ultimate preparedness to use force, if necessary. Experience had taught that diplomacy without the threat of force would be wasted on him. In the spring of 1998, NATO ministers called on all parties to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis, while directing the Alliance's military authorities to prepare options for the use of force, should it prove necessary. (...) To strengthen these initiatives the North Atlantic Council on 13 October authorised activation orders for air strikes against Yugoslavia, in a further attempt to convince President Milosevic to withdraw his forces from Kosovo and to cooperate in bringing an end to the violence.

By the end of January 1999, the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) agreed to convene talks between the parties to the conflict. NATO supported this initiative by issuing a warning to both sides of the conflict and agreeing to the use of air strikes, if required. On 6 February, the parties met at Rambouillet, outside Paris, to discuss a peace agreement.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *KOSOVO ONE YEAR ON Achievement and Challenge - Background to the crisis* Available [Online]: <<http://www.nato.int/kosovo/repo2000/backgrou.htm>> [12 May 1999].

<sup>47</sup> *KOSOVO ONE YEAR ON Achievement and Challenge - Background to the crisis* Available [Online]: <<http://www.nato.int/kosovo/repo2000/backgrou.htm>> [12 May 1999].

In Rambouillet a so-called interim agreement was initiated, which would have seriously restricted Belgrade's control over the province in order to establish a peaceful environment in Kosovo. Initially both parties had serious concerns about the agreement, but finally the ethnic Albanians accepted the plan, while the Serbian side still rejected it.

The talks lasted 17 days with a follow-on session in Paris in mid-March. The proposals offered both sides a great deal, but also required major concessions. The Kosovar Albanians were offered considerable autonomy, ensured by the presence of a NATO-led force, but no independence. The Serbs were asked to concede autonomy, but not sovereignty, with Kosovo's ultimate status left open. Unfortunately, despite the enormous efforts of the international community and the decision by the Kosovar Albanian delegation to sign the Rambouillet Accords, the Yugoslav delegation refused to do so. It is clear the Yugoslav government never seriously sought a negotiated peace at Rambouillet.<sup>48</sup>

After several weeks of further negotiations to persuade Belgrade to accept the terms of the Rambouillet agreement a final rejection was received from the Serbian side. Having been firm in its resolve to prevent the Serbs from committing another act of genocide, even inside their own borders, NATO launched its first air strikes against Yugoslavia on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, with the purpose of

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<sup>48</sup> KOSOVO ONE YEAR ON Achievement and Challenge - Background to the crisis Available [Online]: <<http://www.nato.int/kosovo/repo2000/backgrou.htm>> [12 May 1999].

obtaining Belgrade's full compliance with the terms of the interim agreement.

After one final attempt by Richard Holbrooke to convince President Milosevic to reverse his policies, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, knowing diplomacy had run its course, gave the order to commence Operation Allied Force.

This fateful decision followed months of intense political negotiation and calls on Yugoslavia by the United Nations, the Contact Group, the G8 countries, and others to halt the repression and acts of violence that were provoking an ever-worsening humanitarian crisis. The Yugoslav regime's reckless disregard of these appeals and its campaign of terror against its own population, in direct violation of the most basic, internationally agreed standards of humanitarian conduct, and the failure of all diplomatic efforts to find a political solution, left NATO no option but to use force.<sup>49</sup>

### **C. THE NEW NATO MEMBERS AND THE KOSOVO OPERATION**

Participating in Operation Allied Force as members of NATO but not having fighting units in it, the situation of the Czech Republic and Poland was similar to Hungary's in many ways, although these two countries did not have those special concerns towards the operation as Hungary did. The start of the air campaign 12 days after their accession to the Alliance meant that the period of celebration turned out to be quite short for the three new members.

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<sup>49</sup> KOSOVO ONE YEAR ON Achievement and Challenge - Background to the crisis Available [Online]: <<http://www.nato.int/kosovo/repo2000/backgrou.htm>> [12 May 1999].

The public support as well as the official backing of the air campaign was the most solid in Poland. Although in September 1998, the three Defense Ministers of the future members had agreed that they would not take part in any possible military intervention in Kosovo<sup>50</sup>, during the air strikes the Poles offered to contribute some troops in the potential ground offensive, which finally did not take place.

Among the three new members the Czech Republic was the weakest link. Though President Havel supported the NATO campaign, the governing Social Democrats were very lukewarm, while the former prime minister, Vaclav Klaus, opposed the air strike. "Of the three newcomers, Poland was the most enthusiastic about participating in the campaign against Serbia, but its armed forces are so poorly adapted to NATO's requirements that it was able to provide only token help with military transport. The Czech Republic, where public opinion about joining NATO was somewhat skeptical from the start, reacted to the air strikes with deep dismay."<sup>51</sup> "The Czech Republic is the only one of the three countries where polls suggest more

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<sup>50</sup> *Czech News Agency*, September 21 1998. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/WIRES/ (Czech and Hungary and Poland and Participation and Kosovo and Crisis) [April 15 2000].

<sup>51</sup> *The Economist US Edition*, April 24 1999. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/PAPERS/ (Czech and Public and Opinion and Kosovo and Crisis) [April 15 2000].

people oppose than support the campaign. (...) A recent poll by Czech Television showed nearly 50 percent of those questioned opposed the NATO bombings, 30 percent supported it and 20 percent didn't have an opinion."<sup>52</sup> The Czechs' passivity can be explained by historic motives.

But the nation's historic apathy toward war and weak answers from its government leaders on why Czechs should support the NATO bombings are at the root of the country's dissension, said Pavel Fischer, assistant director of foreign policy. 'Czech history is different than Hungary or Poland,' Fischer said. 'Czech people do not have this conviction of protection and fighting for liberty and freedom. Czech representation also played an important role. They did not have enough strength in explaining to the people why we should support the situation in Kosovo. The first reaction was not very clear or sincere.'<sup>53</sup>

Both the Czechs and the Hungarians strongly opposed any participation in a possible ground attack.

When it comes to ground troops, Hungarians and Czechs are dead against, particularly if their own troops are to be involved. Poles are somewhat less opposed, with 36 per cent of those asked in a recent survey saying they would support the use of ground troops. However, the /Czech/ Social Democrat government has ruled out the participation of Czech troops in any ground offensive. Jan Kavan, the Foreign Minister, said: 'I cannot imagine the Czech government agreeing to the Czech army's participation in any kind of ground force operation of NATO member

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<sup>52</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 1 May 1999. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/PAPERS/ (Czech and Public and Opinion and Kosovo and Crisis) [April 15 2000].

<sup>53</sup> *The Boston Globe*, 1 May 1999. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/PAPERS/ (Czech and Public and Opinion and Kosovo and Crisis) [April 15 2000].

states on the territory of Yugoslavia against the will of the Yugoslav government.<sup>54</sup>

In conclusion though their general support and contribution to the operations was different the three new members fulfilled their obligations and did not jeopardize the cohesion of the Alliance.

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<sup>54</sup> *Financial Times London Edition*, April 23 1999. p.2. Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/PAPERS/ (Czech and Public and Opinion and Kosovo and Crisis) [April 15 2000].

## V. HUNGARY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE KOSOVO OPERATION

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the following armed conflicts after 1990 turned the attention of the world to the Balkans again, and enhanced Hungary's geostrategic importance. Hungary's proximity to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo - the latest operational theaters for NATO - made the country steadily more vital to the West. As the only NATO member bordering Yugoslavia, Hungary had special concerns during the campaign in spring of '99. The air strikes against Yugoslavia had a distinct resonance in Hungarian political life. For Hungarians Operation Allied Force primarily meant Vojvodina, not Kosovo. The future status of Kosovo could influence decisions about the status of Vojvodina, Hungarians noted. The leader of the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party, Istvan Csurka upheld his view: "... as the map of the region will probably be redrawn - it may be possible that a part of Vojvodina will be returned to Hungary, or that the area will receive autonomy to the extent that ensures the protection of ethnic Hungarians living there."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> MTI Hungarian News Agency MTI Econews April 21 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/WIRES/NONENG/ (Csurka and Vojvodina) [12 December 1999].

## A. HUNGARY'S SPECIAL GEOSTRATEGIC AND STRATEGIC POSITION

Hungary's geostrategic importance was significantly enhanced during NATO's IFOR/SFOR Bosnia commitment, when Hungarian territory and infrastructure were used to support the peacekeeping operations. The airfield of Taszar in the southwestern part of Hungary was employed to support American and NATO aircraft and several military installations were made available for NATO.<sup>56</sup> The Kosovo air campaign in 1999 intensified Hungary's involvement. The Hungarian Parliament had authorized NATO to use the country's airspace and airfields without any limitations as early as October 1998 and this parliamentary resolution was reiterated on 24 March 1999.

The possibility of a ground attack against Serbia also gave Hungary huge importance. Though NATO officially excluded a ground attack, and the cohesion of the Alliance might have been seriously damaged by a decision to attack Serbia by employing ground troops, several Allies, particularly the British, strongly supported the idea of a ground operation. "Geographically, an assault from Hungary, north of Serbia, into Belgrade would be most

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<sup>56</sup> NATO aircraft successively used the Hungarian airspace from 1992 in different UN and NATO operations. Earlier the Hungarian Parliament authorized NATO to use the Hungarian airspace during the Persian Gulf war in 1991.



inviting because it would take NATO forces across largely flat, open terrain, according to military specialists."<sup>57</sup>

## B. INDICATIONS OF A POLITICAL CRISIS

Operation Allied Force caused much trouble in several NATO countries' domestic politics; the participation in the air campaign generated severe political debates, especially in Greece and Italy, and even in the United States. Hungary's above mentioned concerns towards the operations were reflected in an overheated domestic political situation, in which several previously constant features of the Hungarian political situation changed. The former national consensus on the main issues of foreign policy eroded, opposition parties both in parliament and outside doubted the government's policy. The government was accused of being incapable of fully controlling Hungary's situation in the changing environment. The public, which initially supported the NATO action, became more and more anxious<sup>58</sup> and prominent members of the intelligentsia publicly opposed Hungary's participation in the

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<sup>57</sup> *The Washington Post*, April 14 1999. p.A1 Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Ground Attack and Hungary and Belgrade) [16 March 2000].

<sup>58</sup> According to the public opinion poll performed by Median Inc. 55 per cent of the population felt that Hungary's participation in the operations increased the chance of a possible retaliation attack by Serbia against Hungary. *Heti Világgyűlés - HVG*, 1 May 1999. pp. 1-9. Available [Online]: <http://www.hvg.hu> [12 December 1999].

operations.<sup>59</sup> The representatives of the Hungarian community in Vojvodina blamed the Hungarian government of playing with the fate of ethnic Hungarians in Yugoslavia. Hungary's participation in the operation caused serious confrontations in the Hungarian-Russian relations as well.

### 1. Disputes Over Certain Aspects of the Operation

Support for the foreign policies of the Hungarian governments in 1989-98 was unanimous among the relevant political parties as well as among the population concerning the previously mentioned triple objectives. Hungary was the only one of the three new members to hold a referendum about the country's admission to NATO in November 1997, and 85 percent of the voters supported it. After 1998 this support changed due to causes at different events. In 1998 the right-wing Hungarian Justice and Life Party or MIEP, one of the political parties that had opposed Hungary's membership in NATO, got into the Hungarian Parliament, and hence gained more attention for its anti-NATO propaganda. The Hungarian Socialist Party or MSZP, the main force in the government in 1994-98, seemed

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<sup>59</sup> Fifty Hungarian professionals and politicians set up the For the Peace of the Balkans movement, and issued an appeal on 1st May in Budapest to halt the Balkan war and end the bloodshed. "The Hungarian government should utilize its rights ensured by membership in NATO: with its veto right and constructive abstention, it should exercise pressure on its allies in order to prevent the spreading of the war to the neighbouring countries..." *MTI - Hungarian News Agency*, 1 May 1999. Available [Online]: [LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/WIRES/](#) (Hungarian Opposition and Kosovo) [6 May 2000].

to change its mind during the NATO operation in March-June 1999, and conditioned its support for the necessary resolutions with demands regarding domestic political issues. On May 5, 1999 Laszlo Kovacs, chairman of the MSZP announced that his party wanted to revise the March 24 resolution: "This has made the parliamentary floor group of the Socialist Party to support an amendment to an earlier parliamentary resolution (approved in March) to rule out the possibility of NATO aircraft to attack Yugoslav targets from Hungarian airports."<sup>60</sup> On 31<sup>st</sup> May 1999 the Socialist party called for the withdrawal of the March resolution. "We are seeking to modify the resolution that allowed NATO unlimited usage of Hungary's airspace and airbases. That would exclude air strikes from Hungarian territory," Socialist party leader Laszlo Kovacs told reporters."<sup>61</sup>

The non-parliamentary Workers' Party turned to the Constitutional Court, asking it to declare that the

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<sup>60</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcast May 5 1999. Available [Online]: [LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/](#) (Hungary and Airports and Attack and Serbia) [6 March 2000].

<sup>61</sup> *Nepszabadsag*, June 1 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.nepszabadsag.hu/Redakcio/Doc.asp?SID=1&IID=1181&CID=15&AID=53586> [15 December 1999].

parliamentary resolution allowing NATO planes to use Hungarian airspace and airfields was unconstitutional.<sup>62</sup>

The public had generally supported the NATO air campaign but the bombing of areas of Vojvodina populated with ethnic Hungarians and the possibility of a ground attack significantly decreased the level of support. Furthermore, two-thirds of the public solidly opposed any plan for a ground attack from Hungarian soil. The fate of the ethnic Hungarian minorities living in Vojvodina caused another fierce political debate in Hungary. Istvan Csurka, the ultra-nationalist chairman of MIEP, demanded a UN-supervised referendum on Hungary's re-annexation of northern Vojvodina. "Our standpoint is the same: we want a UN-monitored referendum to decide whether the majority of Vojvodina Hungarians should become part of their mother country once again."<sup>63</sup> Although Csurka's views are extremely isolated, the Vojvodina question got on the official agenda of the Hungarian government, which promoted the autonomy plan to the international community proposed by the two political parties of the ethnic Hungarian minorities in Vojvodina.

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<sup>62</sup> *Hungarian News Agency - MTI* Available [Online]: <http://www.mti.hu/keres/> (Thürmer) [18 February 2000].

<sup>63</sup> *BBC Monitoring Europe* September 19 1999. Available [Online]: [LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/](#) (Csurka and Vojvodina) [6 March 2000].

The Hungarian Foreign Ministry announced July 6 that two political parties representing the ethnic Hungarian minority living in the Yugoslav province of Vojvodina had created an autonomy plan for the province. The plan, introduced at a meeting in Budapest between the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ) and the Vojvodina Hungarian Democratic Party (VM DP) that was mediated by the Foreign Ministry of Hungary, outlines three possible levels of autonomy for Vojvodina Hungarians: personal autonomy, local autonomy, and territorial autonomy. Personal autonomy would involve personal rights granted due to ethnic status, such as language rights. Local autonomy would mean granting rights to individual ethnic Hungarian communities such as local police forces and village self-government. Territorial autonomy for the whole province would be a return to the autonomy Vojvodina had before 1989.<sup>64</sup>

Concerns about Vojvodina and the fate of the ethnic Hungarians living in the province caused difficulties for the Hungarian government during the decision-making in the Alliance as well. As a newcomer and one of the weakest allies, not actively participating in the conduct of the air operations, Hungary could not hope to have much influence in the decision-making process. However, Hungary's special situation gave the representatives of the country some extra rights, and the Alliance took Hungarian sensitivities into account whenever it could, though expecting Hungary's full-support in the operations.

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<sup>64</sup> "Hungary Supports Vojvodina Autonomy Plan" *STRATFOR Commentary* September 7 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.stratfor.com/cis/commentary/c9907070230.htm> [March 26 2000].

Hungary has made it clear that it is concerned, let me put it that way, with obviously the fate of the Hungarian ethnic community in the Vojvodina, and we are mindful of that as well. But having said that, Hungary is showing all of the support that you would expect. (...) Hungary is as much part of this operation as any other ally and all requests that we have made to the Hungarian government for support have been granted up until now and we expect that to be the case in the future.<sup>65</sup>

## **2. Momentary Lapse of the Multiparty Consensus on Foreign Policy**

Hungarian foreign policy has been characterized by remarkable continuity over the last ten years. The principal objectives of this foreign policy - Hungary's accession to EU and NATO, the buildup of good relations with the neighboring countries, and support for the ethnic Hungarian minorities living outside Hungary - were supported by a consensus of the main political parties until the 1998 elections. The elections of 1998 generated several changes concerning this consensus. The two parties of the coalition government of 1994-98, which had a significant role during the negotiations concerning Hungary's accession to NATO, lost the election and became the opposition. During the NATO air campaign these two parties - the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the

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<sup>65</sup> NATO Spokesman Jamie Shea in CNN Live Event, April 25 1999, Available[Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/ARCNEWS/MAJPAP (Domestic Politics and Hungary and Kosovo) [May 18 2000].

Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) - started to condition their support for the necessary resolutions with demands regarding domestic political issues. In April 1999 they withdrew their support for a bill which would authorize the government to allow foreign troops to enter Hungary, after the governing coalition parties had rejected deputies delegated by the opposition to two parliamentary investigation committees. In May 1999 the Socialist Party tried to amend an earlier parliamentary decision on the unlimited use of Hungarian airspace and airfields by NATO, claiming that the government had not informed the Parliament in detail about NATO's planned steps.

The 1998 election meant not only the end of the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition, but the appearance of the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) in the Hungarian Parliament as well. The MIEP's presence in the Parliament had significant effects. Opposing Hungary's NATO membership, the MIEP questioned the foundations of the established foreign policy, and as a parliamentary party gained more attention to its anti-NATO propaganda. During the Kosovo campaign the chairman of MIEP, Istvan Csurka, demanded a UN-supervised referendum on Hungary's re-

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annexation of northern Vojvodina. Csurka's views were sharply criticized by all the other parliamentary parties, and the Hungarian government officially dissociated itself from the MIEP's territorial demands and ideas on the revision of borders.

### **3. Bombing of Vojvodina and its Effects on the Public**

"Although not participating in the raids, Budapest has allowed the use of its air space for the bombing. From the beginning, Hungarian officials have tried to make it clear to NATO strategists that Budapest cannot and does not want to go any further, taking into account its geographical situation, historical experience and the interests of the 400,000-strong Hungarian minority in Serbia's Vojvodina region. However, such concerns do not seem to have been taken into account by NATO military commanders, who have ordered the destruction of bridges and historical buildings in Vojvodina's capital Novi Sad, thus making Budapest's position even more uncomfortable."<sup>66</sup> Opinions like this did not make easier the task of the Hungarian government to maintain the support of the main political forces and the public during the air strikes. Jozsef Kasza, the mayor of

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<sup>66</sup> "War in the Balkans Tests Hungary's Loyalties" *Inter Press Service*, April 23, 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Bombing and Vojvodina and Hungarians) [7 March 2000].



Szabadka/Subotica, a Vojvodina town mostly populated by ethnic Hungarians, wrote a letter to the NATO Secretary General, Javier Solana, and the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, after his town had been bombed by NATO; and this letter also contributed to the hardship of the Hungarian government. "Subotica did not deserve this fate. A multi-ethnic, multicultural community has been struck. It could boast a high tolerance level, which is now deemed vanishing."<sup>67</sup> In an interview he also warned, "Hungary should fulfill its NATO obligations without sacrificing the Vojvodina Hungarians."<sup>68</sup>

To solve these difficulties the public information strategy of the Hungarian government towards the public considerably improved during the first weeks of the air campaign. At the beginning of the air war the main emphasis of this strategy was to assure the population that Hungary was not in any kind of danger because of its involvement in the operations. After this initial phase the population received more detailed and reasonable explanations about the necessity of attacking certain

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<sup>67</sup> "War in the Balkans Tests Hungary's Loyalties" *Inter Press Service*, April 23 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Bombing and Vojvodina and Hungarians) [7 March 2000].

<sup>68</sup> *Agence France Presse*, April 08 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Bombing and Vojvodina and Hungarians) [7 March 2000].

objectives, even in Vojvodina. The success of this strategy was shown in the results of the survey conducted after the bombing of Vojvodina, when 53% of the population supported the air campaign, and only 27% were against it.<sup>69</sup>

The strategy of the government needed to be improved in communications with the parliamentary parties as well. After the initial disagreement with the Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats, the coalition returned to the practice of continuous six-party consultation, which calmed down the opposition. The radical Hungarian Justice and Life Party and its chairman remained in strict opposition despite all these government efforts.

#### **4. The Ground Attack Scenarios and Their Implications**

The scenarios of a ground attack against Serbia envisaged three available directions of attack. If the objective of the attack was Kosovo, it would be conducted from staging areas in Macedonia or Albania. For an attack against Milosevic's power center in Belgrade the most favorable base of operations would be Hungary.

The initial position of the Hungarian government was that neither air nor ground attacks would be launched from

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<sup>69</sup> *Heti Világazdaság - HVG*, 3 April 1999. pp. 3-9 Available [Online]: <http://www.hvg.hu> [12 December 1999].

Hungarian soil or airspace, nor would Hungary send troops to Yugoslavia. According to *Heti Vilaggazdasag (HVG)*, one of the most reliable weeklies in Hungary, the Hungarian government sent several messages to Belgrade in March, in which it informed the Yugoslav government about the depth of the obligations Hungary had undertaken, and signaled Hungary's will not to send troops to Yugoslavia. In exchange Hungary required Belgrade not to send ethnic Hungarian conscripts and policemen to Kosovo.<sup>70</sup>

This initial position was first challenged by NATO in the first days of May, when the Alliance decided to deploy 24 F/A-18 fighter-bombers in Hungary, to expand its forces in the zone of operations. This decision was the cause of the Socialist Party's (MSZP) disapproval discussed above. The chairman of the MSZP doubted that the government was in full control of the situation, and suspected that Hungary could drift into a more direct combat role.

On the question of ground attack against Yugoslavia from Hungarian soil the government stood firmly. "Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi said on Thursday that Hungary would not be used as a rear base for NATO ground troops going into neighboring Yugoslavia. Speaking

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<sup>70</sup> *Heti Vilaggazdasag - HVG*, 20 March 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.hvg.hu> [12 December 1999].

to the BBC, he said that 'it is not something we would support.' Asked if it meant that Hungary was ruling out "now and forever" that NATO troops would be allowed to enter Yugoslavia from its territory, he said yes. 'There's no way that it would ever be considered.'"<sup>71</sup>

Historical experience also boosted the revulsion in the Hungarian public towards the ground attack against Belgrade from Hungarian soil, since it would have resembled the April 1941 operations by the Wermacht.<sup>72</sup>

Fortunately the NATO air campaign by June proved successful and there was no need to test the firmness of the Hungarian government on this question.

##### **5. The Vojvodina Problem and its Implications**

As already noted the most serious concerns of the Hungarian government were induced by the fate of the ethnic Hungarian minority living in Vojvodina. Learning the lessons of the previous post-Yugoslav wars, when the reservists of ethnic Hungarian background had been called for duty in much higher proportion than their ratio in the

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<sup>71</sup> Agence France Presse, April 29 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Hungary and Airports and Attack and Serbia) [6 March 2000].

<sup>72</sup> An account of the April 1941 campaign against Yugoslavia by the Axis powers is: George Blau, *Invasion Balkans: The German Campaign in the Balkans, Spring 1941* (Shippersburg, 1997)

population, the Hungarian government contacted Belgrade in August 1998 to prevent similar actions. "Hungary has emphatically asked that the Belgrade authorities should not send to Kosovo soldiers and policemen belonging to the ethnic Hungarian minority of Vojvodina. Hungarian Parliamentary State Secretary of Foreign Affairs Zsolt Nemeth summoned Balsa Spadijer, ambassador of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in Budapest, to his office for this purpose. In the meeting, Nemeth reiterated the Hungarian ministry's concern over the escalation of the Kosovo crisis, and the deployment of Vojvodina Hungarian conscripts, reservists and policemen in Kosovo."<sup>73</sup> The local Hungarian communities of Vojvodina shared these fears: "The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians have called for civil disobedience on 3 August that young ethnic Hungarian males should not answer their draft notices from the Yugoslav authorities. This is in order to protest the several hundred new draft notices just received by Ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *BBC Worldwide Monitoring - Monitoring Europe*, August 6 1998. Available [Online]: [LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/](http://www.lexis-nexis.com/news/curnws/) (Hungary and Hungarian and Ethnic and Minorities) [6 March 2000].

<sup>74</sup> Hungarian Lobby "Letters to News Media" Available [Online]: <http://mineral.umd.edu/hl/letters/1661.html> [12 May 2000].

Hungary's concerns regarding the Hungarian ethnic group could be justified by the fears of a possible retaliation against them in the course of the NATO air campaign. As the already quoted Jozsef Kasza summarized, "... the Serb public regards Hungary as an enemy, and this endangers the Vojvodina Hungarian community. Serb extremists are much more dangerous for us than the NATO raids. The Serbs are near us, live with us."<sup>75</sup>

During the air campaign Hungary tried to prevent the bombing of the territories populated by ethnic Hungarians, but Budapest's concerns obviously were not considered every time.

Further implications of the Vojvodina issue are connected with the future status of the province. From 1974 Vojvodina had an autonomous status inside Serbia; and this was annulled by Milosevic in 1989, in the same way as in the case of Kosovo. The fact that the NATO operation would influence the future status of Kosovo generated similar hopes among Hungarians living in Vojvodina and in Hungary. The most extreme conception of the revision of the borders by the chairman of the MIEP has already been discussed. There were more moderate ideas about this

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<sup>75</sup> *Agence France Presse*, April 08 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Hungary and Hungarian and Ethnic and Minorities) [6 March 2000].

issue, and the Hungarian government decided to keep them on its agenda. The linkage of the problems did not gain support among the NATO allies. "The Hungarians' ambitious plans for Vojvodina have already received a cold welcome in the United States. Hungarian ambassador to the United States, Geza Jeszenszky, told the Hungarian government this week (July 29, 1999) that Washington is aware of Vojvodina's demands but 'if the issue was to be raised now, it would make things only more difficult for Milosevic's opposition.' Jeszenszky added that it has been clear throughout the Kosovo conflict that the U.S. policy is to concentrate on one problem at one time, indicating that Vojvodina may be off the table for now."<sup>76</sup>

The concept of the "three level autonomy", which is officially supported by the Hungarian government, was worked out by the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (SVM). It contains three different levels of autonomy: on the level of individual rights; in local administration where ethnic Hungarians are in the majority; and reconstitution of autonomy for the province as a whole. Hungary hoped to receive support for the Vojvodina Hungarians at the EU's

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<sup>76</sup> "Hungarian Steps and Missteps in Kosovo" *Weekly Defense Monitor*, Volume 3 Issue # 29 Available [Online]: <http://www.cdi.org/weekly/1999/issue29.html> [12 December 1999].

Southeastern Europe Stability Pact summit in Sarajevo in July 1999.

The Hungarian government has officially announced it would promote the Vojvodina autonomy plan at a European Union summit taking place later this month in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi said in a July 4 interview for the Duna TV satellite service that the autonomy plan for Vojvodina should become part of political and economic reconstruction of Yugoslavia. Martonyi said the Vojvodina question should be "put on the agenda now, because now is the time to put the issue of Yugoslavia's democratization on the agenda." According to Martonyi, territorial autonomy would be the most difficult to achieve, no matter how "fine and pleasing the idea is." The Hungarian Foreign Minister said implementation of self-government for Hungarian communities in Vojvodina would be more realistic.<sup>77</sup>

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has told leaders at the Sarajevo summit that Hungary will not accept any agreement on the future of Yugoslavia, which does not provide legal and institutional protection for minorities. He said that such protection, especially in the form of autonomy, would prevent future crises in the region.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the Summit approved the Balkan Stability Pact, demanding respect for minority rights; but it did not mention Vojvodina and the Hungarian minority.

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<sup>77</sup> *BBC monitoring Europe*, 5 July 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Hungarian Government and Autonomy and Vojvodina) [6 March 2000].

<sup>78</sup> *BBC monitoring Europe*, 31 July 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Hungarian Government and Autonomy and Vojvodina) [6 March 2000].



## 6. Conflicts with Russia

*"NATO enlargement is a big mistake, possibly the biggest mistake since the end of the Second World War."*  
Former Russian Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov

Hungary's participation in the NATO campaign against Serbia has contributed to the growing tension between Hungary and Russia. Hungary's Atlantic ambitions had earlier been strongly opposed by Russia - as Moscow was dead against the eastern enlargement of the Alliance. "One European country does, of course, have strong and entirely unambivalent feelings about NATO expansion. The entire Russian political class, representing all points of the political spectrum, opposes it."<sup>79</sup>

The NATO air campaign in Serbia evoked serious disagreement from Moscow which chilled the Russian-Hungarian relations as well.

The real point is that these air strikes have come just days after Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were ceremoniously admitted to NATO. From a Russian point of view, it is pretty hard to stomach that NATO should launch its first offensive action in Europe so soon after recruiting Russia's former allies.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Mandelbaum, M., "NATO Expansion: A Bridge to the Nineteenth Century" Available [Online]: <http://www.cpss.org/nato/mandel97.htm> [25 March 2000].

<sup>80</sup> *The Daily Telegraph (London)* 26 March 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/PAPERS/ (Domestic Politics and Hungary and Kosovo) [18 May 2000].

The stopping of a Russian-Belorussian convoy during the campaign in April containing humanitarian aid, fuel and armored trucks for Yugoslavia ignited the tension. The incident irritated Russia, which reacted by calling back its ambassador to Budapest for consultations, and called off a scheduled official visit of Hungary's foreign minister to Moscow. Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov threatened that the actions of the Hungarian authorities would have the most serious consequences for further Russian-Hungarian relations.<sup>81</sup>

Moscow's embarrassment was further boosted in June "when the Hungarian Parliament approved opening an air corridor over its territory for flights of units of the KFOR, but the approval did not apply to Russia's forces wishing to overfly Hungary. Hungary officially did not consider the Russian unit in Kosovo a legitimate KFOR unit, until the settlement of the disagreement over Russia's role in KFOR."<sup>82</sup> This Russian overflight request would have served to transport a contingent of 2,500 Russian paratroopers as reinforcement for the Russian forces, which had seized the Pristina airport some days earlier. Since

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<sup>81</sup> *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, April 20 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/ARCNEWS/ (Domestic Politics and Hungary and Kosovo) [18 May 2000].

<sup>82</sup> *United Press International*, June 16 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Hungary and Russia and Overfly) [18 March 2000].

Hungary denied approving the Russian request, Moscow tried to get permission to overfly from Romania and Bulgaria, but both countries rejected the Russian request. Hence the secret plan, as Zbigniew Brzezinski called Milosevic's attempt for partitioning Kosovo with the help of the Russians, did not work. "It thus appears that Milosevic's sudden acquiescence was part of a desperate double-cross attempt engineered jointly by Belgrade and Moscow. The collusion was contrived to outwit NATO by salvaging for Serbia -- under Russia's protection -- the northeastern part of partitioned Kosovo, and to gain for frustrated Russia a significant boost in international prestige. The attempt faltered because three small European countries had the gumption to defy Moscow, and NATO remained firm in not agreeing to a separate Russian sector. Under these circumstances, the double-cross did not work."<sup>83</sup>

A more serious scandal in Hungarian-Russian relations burst out in November '99 after the Hungarian PM's statement about the possibility of deploying U.S. nuclear weapons on Hungarian territory in a crisis situation. Viktor Orbán spoke about this possibility during his official visit to Canada. The Russian reaction was

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<sup>83</sup> Testimony of Zbigniew Brzezinski to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on October 6, 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.csis.org/hill/ts991006zb.html> [10 May 2000].

extremely harsh. Orbán's statement was perceived as a direct violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, in which NATO had confirmed that it had no intention, plan, or reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of the new members. "It would be a direct violation of the cooperation accord signed between Russia and NATO under which the Alliance declared it had neither projects nor intentions to deploy weapons on the territory of its new members," said Russian foreign ministry spokesman Vladimir Rakhmanin. "This directly confirms Russia's disquiet over NATO enlargement."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Agence France Presse*, November 03 1999. Available [Online]:  
LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ (Hungarian and Russian and Relations) [7 March 2000].

## VI. ANALYSIS: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUNGARY'S FUTURE ROLE - LESSONS LEARNED

Hungary would like to play an active role in the Balkan settlement process. The Hungarian government has stated several times Hungary's ambitions to become a regional center of the South Eastern European security framework. As a new member of NATO, Hungary has several challenges at hand, and its active involvement in this regional security process may strengthen its position in the Alliance. The effort of the present coalition in Hungary to link the settlement of the status of Kosovo and Vojvodina seems unlikely to be successful. Hungary's new partners are not willing to create a new precedent for emerging ethnic separatism that could emerge from the example of an autonomous Vojvodina. Hungary has to continue its good neighborly policy and help Yugoslavia to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic framework and promote the idea of "traversable borders".

The Kosovo crisis abruptly cut off the honeymoon period of the new members in NATO, and made Hungary a front-line country. Hungary's special situation in the crisis - being in the vicinity of the operations, seeing ethnic Hungarians as victims of the bombing of Vojvodina,

though only as so-called "collateral damages"- caused severe difficulties for the government, which was attacked by the parliamentary opposition as well as by political parties outside the parliament and by several public opinion leaders. Fortunately, when the air operations started the government coalition was still "in full strength", the debates that divided the coalition came forward in a later period. During the Kosovo crisis of March-June 1999, the Hungarian government did not need the support of the far-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party to get a bill through, which recently have already occurred. Despite some previously mentioned discontent the public generally supported the government's policy, even after the bombing of Subotica. During the air operations the Hungarian government recognized the need to reconsider its original position and allowed the use of the Hungarian airspace for attacking maneuvers as well.

The new NATO partner most caught up in unanticipated decision-making is Hungary, the only member of the alliance sharing a common border with Serbia. Not only will Hungary and Serbia remain neighbors long after the Kosovo crisis is over, but their relationship is further complicated by the fact that 300,000 ethnic Hungarians live in Vojvodina, Serbia's northernmost province. Hungary has no desire to give Milosevic an excuse to extend his ethnic cleansing. So Hungary's initial reaction to NATO's engagement with Serbia was one of caution,

taking the position that neither its territory nor troops would be made available to NATO.

But as the extent of Milosevic's assault against the Kosovars became clear, Hungary realized that its NATO membership is primarily a commitment to Western values, not geography or ethnicity. These values are the keystone in the architecture of Hungary's peaceful, democratic future. So Hungary has demonstrated its fundamental commitment to NATO by agreeing to provide the unrestricted use of its airspace for NATO planes, and in the last few days offering the use of air bases, principally Tazsar in Southern Hungary, to NATO.<sup>85</sup>

This maneuvering space of the Hungarian government has been considerably reduced since the end of the Kosovo campaign because of the debates inside the governing coalition and the sharpening of the domestic political situation.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, the political crisis that was caused by the Kosovo campaign could not be again handled in the manner that it previously was; the weakened coalition would not be

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<sup>85</sup> *The New York Post*, 4 June 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/ALLNWS/ (Hungarian Government and Kosovo Crisis) [7 May 2000].

<sup>86</sup> The domestic political situation in Hungary is well-characterized by Peter Finn of the *Washington Post* writing about the Hungarian PM. "Orban came to power in 1998, his conservative Federation of Young Democrats (Fidesz)-Hungarian Civic Party forming a coalition with two other right-wing parties. It has been an eventful debut. Orban has successfully weathered a series of crises--including the Russian economic collapse that shook central Europe, and the war in the Serbian province of Kosovo. The latter was particularly sensitive for Hungary, a new member of NATO, because a large ethnic Hungarian minority lives in northern Serbia, the dominant republic of Yugoslavia. The economy righted itself and Hungary provided full logistical support for NATO operations against Yugoslavia. Outside the hothouse of Hungary's domestic politics and the merits of any individual dispute, Orban's political battles, especially successive standoffs with Demszky over infrastructure projects in the capital, seem most revealing of the prime minister's ideological DNA: his abiding distrust of the left; his suspicion of the Budapest elite; his desire to cleave the country's politics into clear-cut left and right parties; and his willingness to get in anyone's face to achieve his goals." *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 30 January 2000. p. A18.

able to resolve these problems, hence a similar crisis would cause much deeper political crisis in Hungary.



## VII. CONCLUSIONS

### FADING HOPES AND ILLUSIONS

Hungary has had some unjustified hopes about its future role in the Balkans settlement process. Hungary championed the interests of the Vojvodina ethnic Hungarians, and unsuccessfully tried to get support for their autonomy plan. Hungary has envisioned a much greater role for itself in the Southeastern Europe Stability process as well. Hungary has had some illusions about receiving some rebuilding contracts in Kosovo as compensation after the air campaign. "Instead of cash, the international community may compensate Hungary by guaranteeing its involvement in the reconstruction of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo" - declared the Hungarian Foreign Minister.<sup>87</sup>

The awakening process has already started. "Hungary is not in a position to play the role of a superpower in the region, so it must acquiesce to the fact it is unable to influence decisions such as the direction of NATO's

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<sup>87</sup> *Extel Examiner*, 15 June 1999. Available [Online]: LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/ALLNWS/ (Hungary and Kosovo Compensate) [7 March 2000].

military attacks, the location of reconstruction headquarters or the progress of peace talks."<sup>88</sup> - summarized Gyula Molnar, MP of the opposition Socialist Party.

The Kosovo operation was a unique exercise for NATO in many aspects as well. For the first time in its history NATO, according to the new Strategic Concept, accomplished a "humanitarian intervention", a non-Article 5 mission to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and to stop an apparent act of genocide. Operation Allied Force was the first operation of the 19-member Alliance. The political unity of the 19 members had to be maintained during the 11-week campaign by taking the different interests of the member states into consideration. The Alliance's decision to attack a sovereign country without the explicit authorization of the UN Security Council created a precedent in international law. Experts are debating the consequences of this decision; many question the legitimacy of the use of force against Yugoslavia, while others consider it reasonable. There are differences in views even among the NATO members about the necessity of a UNSC authorization in forming the legal basis of the operation.

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<sup>88</sup> *BBC Worldwide Monitoring - Monitoring Europe*, 19 September 1999. Available [Online]: [LEXIS-NEXIS/NEWS/CURNWS/ \(Hungary and Lessons and Kosovo Crisis\) \[7 May 2000\]](#).

Operation Allied Force achieved its goals in that it made possible an interim settlement. The United Nations Security Council approved a resolution - UNSCR 1244 - that specified general principles on the political solution to the Kosovo crises. The future settlement of the status of Kosovo will be decided within the framework of the existing European security institutions like NATO, the OSCE, the EU and initiatives like the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

While the problem of Hungarians living outside of the nation's borders remains a feature of domestic politics and a latent problem of the European system of states, the events interpreted here reveal that the general problem of war and nationalism in the European experience has perhaps entered a new phase in the new century with the results of the Kosovo crisis. In this regard the role of multi-national organizations, which adhere not solely to a naked exercise of power-political interests on the model of the European dynasties, stands in uneasy relation to what is claimed by many to be the new ideal of humanitarian intervention. Only time will tell the degree to which these events truly signal something new in policy and strategy, but surely new for NATO and its members (especially its newest members) was the

waging of war on the continent of Europe, even if only for a few weeks. Hungarians had to learn this lesson quickly and with little preparation. Yet the outcome was surely better than many critics feared, not the least of whom were vociferous doubters of NATO Enlargement in the US, who assert that Europeans in central, eastern and southern Europe tend to blood thirst and revanchism on the old scale.

To be sure, Hungary found itself unable to influence the full diplomatic course of events connected with the violent collapse of ex-Yugoslavia. The resources available to national diplomacy and policy in the face of a concerted effort by the leading Euro-Atlantic democracies proved limited, indeed. However, the aspects of domestic politics in a democratic setting in the midst of crisis offered a new, democratic Hungary a set of lessons in matters long familiar to the other NATO democracies about the impact of policy and strategy on domestic politics and vice versa. Critics have overstated the imperatives of unity of opinion and effort in NATO and misunderstood the importance of allowing a full range of democratic political forces to play out, even in the midst of such a profound crisis as that in Kosovo in 1998-99 and its implications for a new Hungary. While this baptism of fire was unpleasant and filled with

unhappy and tense moments, which may have highlighted the limits of national policy on the pattern of traditional sovereignty and statecraft, one can imagine far more dreadful outcomes, which, one may be thankful, did not take place. The Hungarian experience of the Kosovo crisis points in two directions at once: either toward a peaceful future of a multi-lateral resolution of conflict (which may include armed force on a multi-national basis of limited endurance) or the solutions put in hand in the era 1919-1939 and again in certain quarters in the years of the 1990s which led to the Kosovo crisis, itself. The imperatives that arise from this choice must, in turn, be digested and internalized by the democratic societies of the West. In this regard, Hungary has done its part.

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